

EDUCATIONAL LIAISON'S TIP SHEET

I have been identified and appointed as a volunteer Educational Liaison; what are my responsibilities?

First, you must complete a background check. Your responsibilities, unless otherwise ordered by the court include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Attend educational meetings and dependency hearings;
- Meet with local school personnel at regular intervals regarding the youth's educational performance and academic needs;
- Seek to understand the youth's academic strengths, areas of concern, and future life goals;
- Advocate for necessary educational services;
- Join in decision-making processes regarding appropriate school placements, school coursework, personal future, and educational planning;
- Explore opportunities and barriers for youth to participate in extracurricular activities;
- Involve youth in educational decisions as developmentally appropriate;
- Keep all information regarding the youth confidential except as ordered by the court;
- Serve as the surrogate parent or educational representative under federal law (when appointed);
- Access all educational records pertaining to the youth involved in the case, without the consent of a parent or guardian of the child, or if the child is under thirteen years of age; and
- Provide a written or oral report to the court during each dependency hearing (see below).

REPORT TO COURT – EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

What is the Educational Liaison's Report to the Court?

*You will use **DSHS form 15-432** to complete your report to the court.* The report provides an opportunity for Educational Liaisons' to share their valuable information about how the child is doing educationally. The information you share can help the court better understand the child's progress and needs.

What goes in the Report?

Focus on giving firsthand information about the child's educational progress. Do not offer opinions about others involved, e.g., teachers, school counselors, school staff. The report must include information about the youth's:

- Educational progress
- Experience in school; and
- The Educational Liaison's and youth's recommendations regarding needed services in school or the community.

How do I get my report to the Court for the child/youth's hearing?

It is important for the judge to have enough time to review your report. Here are several ways the court can receive your report:

- Send the report directly to the court 2-3 weeks before the hearing.
- Send the report to the case worker 2-3 weeks before the hearing; it will be filed with the case worker's report.
- If the report arrives after the case worker's report has been sent, the case worker will send/take it to court.
- It is helpful to let the case worker know you are sending your report, otherwise he may not know to watch for it.
- Educational Liaison's are encouraged to come to the court hearing and bring their report with several copies.

What should I expect when I go to Court?

Different courts have different procedures:

- Most courts hear a large number of cases each day and only have a short time to hear each case.
- Some courts schedule multiple hearings at the same time, so be prepared to wait.
- Hearings may last less than ten minutes in total.
- Hearings can be postponed or continued at the last minute.
- Some courts ask the caregiver to make a short statement.
- Others ask caregivers specific questions about the child.
- Others only allow you to submit your written report.

How should I prepare if I'm asked to speak at the Court hearing?

- It's helpful to write down two or three important points you want to share ahead of time.
- The Educational Liaison's Report to the Court form can help you plan and organize what you want to share.
- Your oral report should be factual, brief, organized and describe the educational progress and needs of the child you have observed and discussed firsthand.
- Try to avoid words like: "think", "feel", "believe", they are emotional; you want to stick to observations and facts.
- The child's case worker can offer suggestions on what to expect.

EDUCATIONAL LIAISON'S REPORT TO THE COURT OUTLINE:

*Focus on what has occurred since the last court review. You **do not** need to address every area. But the first three bulleted items must be included.*

School Progress and Adjustment:

- Educational progress (include Child's grade in school, favorite subjects, whether the child is performing at grade level);
- Experience in school;
- The Educational Liaison's and youth's recommendations regarding needed services in school or the community. This may include:
 - Any educational testing the child has completed and results of the testing.
 - Last Individual Education Plan (IEP) discussed:
- Dates of any school conferences you have attended, and results, especially if the child is in special education classes.
- Extracurricular school activities the child participates in, such as sports, debate club, leadership opportunities, etc.

Tip: *Do not write in the margins on the court report form – the court scans documents and your comments may be lost.*